THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) A proposal to introduce logistics post as a business development venture of the Department of Posts is being examined.

(b) and (c) The world over, many postal administrations have profitably entered the business of providing logistics services. An independent study was commissioned by Department of Posts to evaluate the market size of logistics services, and business possibilities for the Department of Posts in this area. The report of the study became available in 2003. It estimated that the market size of logistics services was between Rs. 60,000 to 75,000 crore per annum, which was expected to grow at the rate of 10 to 12% per annum. The study also concluded that 85 to 90% of the market was in the unorganised sector, and even the organised sector did not have an all India presence. The study, therefore, concluded that Department of Posts could get into the logistics business, which would not only provide a reliable service to growing commerce in India, but would also have the potential to earn additional revenue for the Department. The study estimated that when launched across the country in a full fledged manner, logistics post could have the scope to capture about 5% of the relevant market, and the market share could also go up in the coming years. The study also identified that the potential was higher in the short and medium distance haulage and in providing customer interface services, though long distance haul also had potential.

Accordingly, the viability and feasibility of a proposal to gradually introduce logistics post as a premium and commercial service, wherever it is profitable and administratively feasible, and for that purpose to start a pilot between limited stations in a few States is being examined.

Logistics posts is expected to enable Department of Posts to meet the needs of its customers in a more comprehensive and business like manner and also provide facilities like computerized booking, track and trace and intimation of delivery.

Nuclear energy

*258. DR. VIJAY MALLYA:
SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to tap nuclear energy for

meeting the increasing demands of energy, keeping in view the limited availability of petroleum resources including gas;

(b) what is the percentage of nuclear energy as part of the total electricity output in the country;

(c) whether there is any proposal to augment investment in exploiting nuclear energy in the country;

(d) whether any study has been prepared on the costs and benefits of nuclear power expansion in the country; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Government is considering all fuel options for meeting the increasing demands of energy of the country. Nuclear power is one such option.

(b) During the year 2003-04 the electricity generated from nuclear power was 17,861 Million Units (MUs). This is about 3.2% of the electricity generated by the utilities in the country.

(c) Yes, Sir. Government has approved setting up of nine nuclear power reactors, which are at various stages of construction. The completion cost of these projects is around Rs. 29,500 crores.

(d) Yes, Sir, A study on "Long term cost-effectiveness of nuclear energy" was carried out by NPCIL in 1998-99. This study has now been updated in June, 2004 based on current inputs.

(e) The study evaluated generation cost of electricity produced by nuclear power *vis-a-vis* Thermal Power, as base load Central generating stations. Factors such as cost of the project, financing cost, cost of fuels alongwith its transportation etc. were considered. The study suggests that the electricity from nuclear power at distances of about 800 kms from coal pit heads is a long term cost effective option.

Torture of Iraqi prisoners

*259. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Iraqi prisoners at Abu Gharib prison and elsewhere were subjected to unprecedented torture and immoral abuse of their rights as human beings; and